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ABSTRACT

The traditional method of evaluating student speeches involves an instructor who listens to the speeches while filling out a critique form and/or writing comments. There are many problems with the traditional method that can be solved by the use of computer feedback; moreover, it will give the student speaker specific design and evaluation suggestions allowing the instructor to perform a more thorough and balanced student evaluation. A computer feedback system would involve the following: (1) an appropriately designed evaluation form for each speaking assignment; (2) a bank of prepared comments keyed to each of the evaluation forms; (3) a word processing macro system such as WordPerfect or MicroSoft Word and augmented with Tempo II Plus or Quickeys 2; (4) Macintosh Powerbook. Rend Lake College (Illinois) speech communication faculty would be involved in designing the various evaluation forms and macro comments to be used in Speech 1101. Each instructor would be assigned a Macintosh Powerbook equipped with the appropriate software. The advantages of computer feedback are numerous: it enhances the instructor's role as evaluator and critic; it improves departmental evaluation consistency; it increases student learning through immediate feedback; it motivates students and reduces grading complaints; it facilitates student evaluations; it adds a computer usage element to Speech 1101. (TB)

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RATIONALE - FOR EQUIPPING THE SPEECH INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF AT REND LAKE COLLEGE WITH LAP TOP COMPUTERS

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The traditional method evaluating student speeches involves one instructor who listens to student speeches while filling out a critique form and/or writing comments. There are many problems with the traditional method of evaluation that can be solved by the use of computer feedback; moreover, it will give the student speaker specific design and evaluation suggestions allowing the instructor to perform a more thorough and balanced student evaluation. We are proposing that the Speech Communication Staff at Rend Lake College each be equipped with a Macintosh Power Book with appropriate software to perform the evaluation portion of the student speakers' work at the time of presentation. Coupled with our current evaluation system of a "video record" of all speech presentations in Speech 1101, plus the acquisition of an "outline processor" software package installed on all Macintosh computers in the RLC computer labs, it is felt that the evaluation component as well as the instructional level of the basic speech course would become one of more educational value to the RLC student.

PROBLEMS WITH TRADITIONAL EVALUATION

One of the main problems with the typical evaluation procedure at Rend Lake College is that the instructor can not give complete attention to the speaker and, at the same time, fill out an accurate evaluation form, write helpful comments, and assign a grade. Even experienced professors miss some of the student's presentation each time they look down to evaluate. For part-time instructors, the problem is obviously greater. As a result, most instructors do one of two things. Either they keep written comments to a minimum or take notes during the presentation planning to assign grades and write more detailed comments later when they are back in their offices. Both of these solutions have problems. Research has discovered that brief, written comments are often vague, incomplete, and even indecipherable; they are often perceived as negative by the student speaker. Even positive comments like "good" are open to interpretation. Students who need extra support or special help in correcting a problem benefit little from brief, rushed comments.

On the other hand, suspending immediate feedback to allow for time to write or type more extensive comments decreases the impact of the feedback. When students receive feedback on a performance a few days to a week later, thy usually have begun work on the next performance and often have difficulty remembering what was said on the previous one. Even if they could remember, what a speaker thinks was said is not always what really occured. If the comments were written an hour or more after the speech, it is quite possible that the instructor really is in error. After hearing 10 to 20 speeches in a day, there is no way to accurately remember what a specific student did or said without watching a videotape of the presentation. Even the most dedicated instructors don't have that kind of time. Therefore, an evaluation procedure that would allow maximum attention to a presentation yet produce thoughtful, supportive comments that not only identify a student's problem but also suggest how to correct it is needed.

The final problem with the typical evaluation procedure involves student complaints of grades received. When students have worked hard on a presentation and have put themselves on the line in front of colleagues, receiving negative criticism and/or a grade that is lower than they expected is upsetting. This is expecially true when the students are experienced adults. They want to know exactly why they received a particular grade and are willing to argue their cases. Although even experienced professors have to deal with student complaints, complaints are often worse when the instructor is part-time. Therefore, a procedure that simplifies the evaluation process while providing for consistency and reducing student complaints would improve speech communication instruction.

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPUTER FEEDBACK SYSTEM

The computer feedback system involves:

(1) an appropriately designed evaluation form for each speaking assignment
(2) a bank of prepared comments keyed to each area of the evaluation form
(3) a word processing Macro system such as WordPerfect or MicroSoft Word and augmented with Tempo II Plus or Quickeys 2
(4) Macintosh Powerbook

Rend Lake College Speech Communication Faculty would be involved in designing the various evaluation forms and macro comments to be used in Speech 1101. Each instructor would be assigned a Macintosh Powerbook equipped with the appropriate software. The student would provide the instructor with a formatted disk on the day of speech performance. The instructor would evaluate the student's speech using the developed format. Upon completion of the evaluation the instructor would then record the information upon the student's disk and the Mac hard disk, then return the disk to the student. RLC students would take their disks to a print station located in various existing locations on the RLC campus and print a hard copy of the evaluation. The current Speech 1101 evaluation process at Rend Lake College requires that the student's performance be video taped. Once the students have their printouts they could then proceed to a viewing station already established on the RLC campus, where they would then review their work with the evaluation in hand.

An evaluation form would be designed for each student speaking assignment in the course. (Current forms used in Speech 1101 could be adapted for usage) This type of evaluation form would be designed to have the following advantages:

- Each topic area would be assigned an easy–to–remember, five–digit code number. (The first digit would refer to the main topic being evaluated, the second digit would refer to the specific sub-areas to be evaluated; digit three represents the type of comment; and digits four and five represent the alternative form of comment that is selected)

- Each item would be written in the positive rather than the negative;

- Each topic area is evaluated on a Likert–type scale which assures more grade conformity from various instructors (especially part-time instructors).

- ❒ Students don't have to guess why a particular grade was assigned. Strengths and weaknesses are obvious. They can also tell how close they were to receiving a higher or lower grade.

- ❒ Peer evaluations by students are more valuable when this form is used. (This is already a part of the evaluation process in Speech 1101)

- ❒ A broad range of fully detailed and comprehensive comments on each topic area on the evaluation form is made possible

- ❒ Comments include reinforcing compliments (praise), identification of problem areas with suggestions for improvement, and references to the textbook or other relevant instructional materials

- ❒ Allows for personalization of evaluation by each instructor with built in prompt comments as options in each area

- ❒ At any time, instructors may type additional keyboard–generated comments not available in the files. Comments can also be edited or the student's name added at any time

- ❒ Allows these fully detailed and comprehensive comments to be stored in the computer's memory.

ADVANTAGES OF COMPUTER FEEDBACK

1. **Enhances the instructor's role as evaluator and critic.**

   Computer feedback allows the instructor to provide detailed, supportive feedback to the student speaker with a minimum of time and effort. Since the time required to critique a presentation is greatly reduced, the instructor can pay more complete attention to the speaker, thus increasing the accuracy of the evaluation.

2. **Improves departmental evaluation consistency.**

   Since the various comments for each performance goal of each assignment are already written and ready for immediate use on the computer, the quality and tone of student evaluations will be basically the same for all Speech 1101 sections. Using a standardized evaluation form also helps with consistency.

3. **Increases student learning through immediate feedback.**

   Maximum learning normally occurs under conditions of immediate feedback. Without computer assistance, written instructor comments must either be kept brief or immediate feedback must be suspended to allow for time to write or type more extensive evaluations. Not only do students get immediate feedback from the instructor, but when coupled with the video tape of the performance, students get a structured approach to viewing and performing the self–critique component of their actual presentation.

4. **Motivates students and reduce grading complaints.**

When students first attend a speech class they often feel that speech communication has little relevance to the "real" world. Seeing a computer along with video tape equipment in the classroom both surprises and impresses them. Communication researchers have found that students view computer use as "fun," "different," "Helpful," and "kind of exciting." Students who view their own presentations are usually more critical then the instructor and are more likely to view instructor comments as accurate and helpful. If there is a problem, the student and instructor can sit down together and view the student's presentation discussing each area of the evaluation printout.

5. **Facilitates student evaluations.**

Without computer assistance, it is virtually impossible to maintain a copy of each student's performance critiques. Critiques are useful when students have specific questons. They also can be used for quick comparision while evaluating a later student performance. It is more meaningful to students when references to past performances can be made. Instructors with a large number of students (100-150 students) find references to past performances almost impossible without some jog to their memories.

6. **Adds a computer usage element to Speech 1101 in two ways;**

First, by using the Macintosh Lab to create the required speech outlines as specified in the existing course structure, second, by using a "print" station to get a hard copy of their evaluation.

DESIGN AND EVALUATION OF SYSTEM

1. The Speech staff currently has access to Macintosh computers in their offices. Once the appropriate software and site licenses were acquired and installed, the development of the evaluation forms with comments would begin. Outside consultation would be provided during this time.

   Time line for development–one semester
   Cost–Software $594.00 each (without site license) x (7) = $2,970.00
   Consultant cost—$2,500.00

2. Installation of the "outline processor" program on all Macintosh computers in the labs, in addition to the staff's. Scheduling all Speech 1101 sections in the teaching lab at the beginning of each semester so that the instructors could help the students become familiarized with the program. All four of the speech outlines in 1101 would be required to be produced using this assistance program.

   Time line–on going once installed
   Cost–Software $300.00 plus site license

3. Five Macintosh PowerBook 520 4MB Hard Disk 160 would be purchased. The program would be tested by Joseph Henry Rust and Christina Kuberski in six sections of Speech 1101. Problems with the program would be detected and corrected during this time. Example speeches would be Video–taped during this test period, to be used for training of all speech faculty.

   Time line—testing of program one semester
   Cost–Hardware $1,927.00 each x (5) = $13,489.00
   Video–In Kind

4. All speech faculty would train on the portable computers using video taped speeches. Problems with the program could be corrected and evaluation, differences between faculty would be analyzed resulting in a clarified department grading philosophy.

   Time line–for training–one day
   Cost–Salary $500.00 (Paying part–time staff)

5. All Speech 1101 sections would be evaluated using the developed program. All students will be asked a series of Likert–type questions designed to determine the quality, tone, and personal applicability of the comments and will be asked to make written suggestions. At the end of the test semester (at the end of each year thereafter), speech faculty will meet to discuss evaluation results, make suggestions, and plan needed changes.

   Time line–on going
   Cost–On going updating of software and maintenance of computers

   Total time for implementation of program–three semesters
   Total cost of program—$19,759.00